

“Fiery Trials” Embraced, Endured, and Overcome
1 Peter 4:12-19

INTRODUCTION

A message for difficult times—perhaps a distant nightmare, perhaps not.

1. A Review of Peter’s letter from the beginning to our passage.
2. A Sobering Declaration, verse 4:12a. “A fiery trial”
(A third reference to trials or persecution in this letter.)
 - Reference #1: 1.6-7, trials compared to a refining fire. Various trials for a short time.
 - Reference #2: 3:13-17, suffering despite a zeal for righteousness.
Testify to your faith, maintain a humble and reverent spirit.
Some opponents will be shamed to silence.
3. Why we should not be Surprised when “fiery trials” come, verses 12b-14.
Because God has his purposes for allowing Christians to be persecuted.
 - A. Purpose #1: to refine and strengthen your faith (vs. 12b)
 - B. Purpose #2: to infuse rejoicing in your heart for now and for the return of Christ (vs. 13)
 - C. Purpose #3: for a greater manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit (vs. 14)
The presence of the glory and Spirit of God is what makes possible the resolve and strength to live without compromise in a society hostile to Christ. This must be an enhanced presence that either empowers the believer’s heart with courage or makes the presence of God radiate from them in a way that makes observers conscious of God.
4. Christians must guard against giving opponents any just cause for Persecuting them, verses 15 and 16.
If you are known to be a Christian and suffer on account of your reputation for loving Christ, let that not shame you. And do not back down from your open testimony.
5. Judgment for purifying and judgment for punishment, verses 17-18.
The refining fire acknowledged in verse 12 is a signal. It tells us that God is at work purging worldliness and sin from among those who claim to know Christ (vs 17a).

It also signals that God stands ready to begin the final judgment of all humanity for its rejection of the gospel (vs 17b-18).

Note 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 and 2 Timothy 1:8-12

6. The Concluding Encouragement, verse 19.

What should Christians do when the “fiery trials” come?

Keep doing good and entrust yourself to a faithful Creator.
All trials are purposed by God and controlled by God.

It will be a false conclusion if you say, “God does not care about me and has obviously abandoned me”.

That is wrong. Why?

First, because Peter already said in 3:17 that suffering for doing good can sometimes be within God’s will.

Second, because Peter has taught us that fiery trials have purpose for Christians—to test us and purify those who are genuine.

Third, because we must take confidence in the working of the Holy Spirit who loves to bring glory into situations when we stand up to the ridicule or the unjust violence.

That is when the Holy Spirit increases the force of His presence.

That force may be for persuasiveness in witnessing, endurance of mistreatment, or neutralizing attackers.

Fourth, because fiery trials should be recognized as a signal that God is preparing to bring condemnation on the unbelieving world.

Fifth, because we are called to persist in doing good. That means living by the moral and ethical standards of the Bible.

It means acting kindly and benevolently toward your neighbors.

It means cooperating with governing authorities as much as possible until they demand that you sin.

It means loving and serving the Christians you know—especially in your own families--and those you meet with in your own church.

Sixth, because God wants us to put ourselves in His hands for hope and comfort.

Summary

Suffering as a Christian should not be unexpected. It is no reason for shame. Jesus proved that.

Suffering is an opportunity to glorify God. It is a reason for joy in that it provides proof of a genuine testimony of salvation.

It is also a certification of our ultimate destiny--to be accepted by God when Christ returns, or we are brought through death into Christ’s presence.